

# Nationbuilding and the Marine Corps

by Maj Michael D. Weltsch

*Much of what the U.N. is now doing in Somalia—promoting stability and helping another nation build up an infrastructure capable of feeding and supporting its own citizens—is something Marines have been doing for much of this century.*

On 2 December 1992 the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council voted to intervene in Somalia. The U.N. set a short-term objective of providing relief for the starving people of Somalia, and a long-term goal of restoring peace to the war-torn country. Although the decision has just been announced, it is possible, from the briefing given by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen Colin Powell, the statements about U.N. objectives, and, more important, from the past experiences of Marines, to foretell what will

be required if the U.N. objectives are to be successfully accomplished.

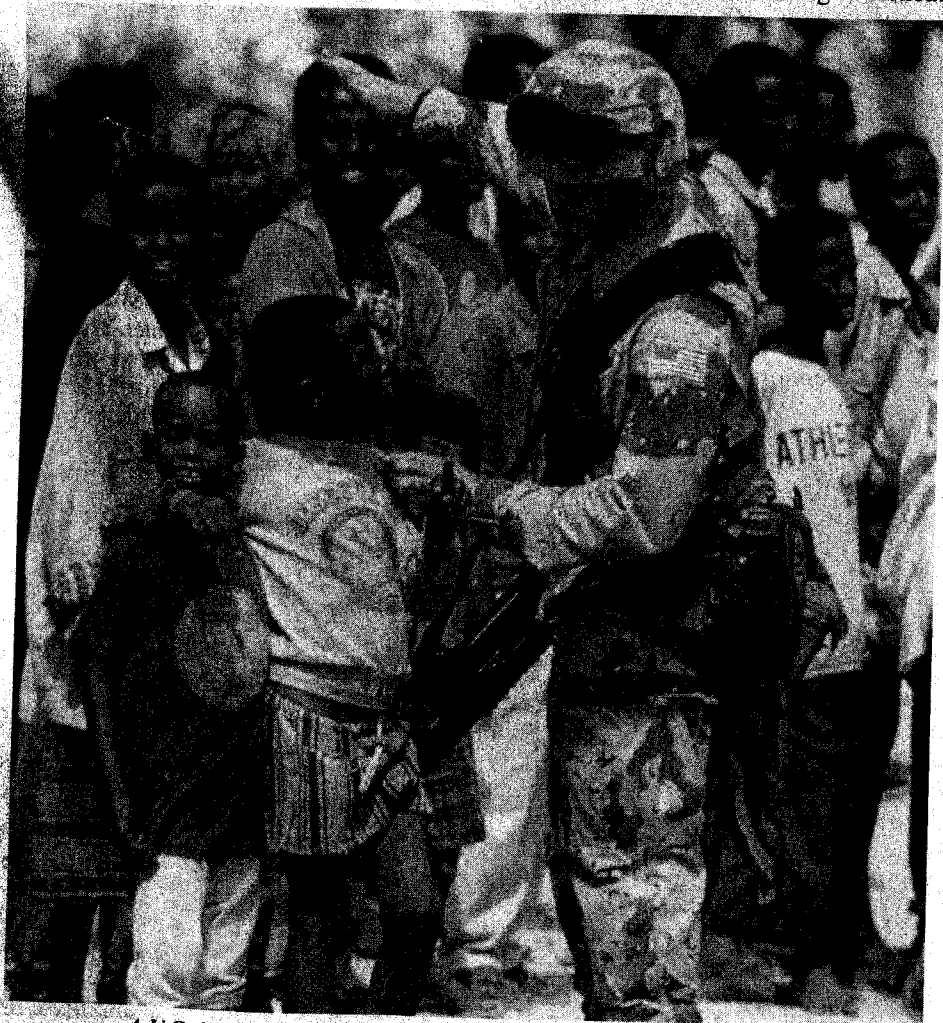
*Phase 1. Initial demonstrations or landing and action of vanguard.* In this phase, a U.N. peacekeeping force spearheaded by Americans will deploy into theater. The initial force, although small in numbers, will "assume the initiative, as a demonstration to indicate a determination to control the situation, and to prepare the way for any troops to follow. . . . Owing to its limited personnel the action of the vanguard will often be restricted to an active defense after seizing a critical

area such as an important seaport or other city, the capital of the country or disturbed areas of limited extent." However, even "after landing, instructions probably will be received not to exert any physical force unless it becomes absolutely necessary, and then only the minimum necessary to accomplish its purpose."

*Phase 2. The arrival of reinforcements and general military operations in the field.* In this phase reinforcements will arrive to begin "general military operations" to stabilize the situation. "During this period the theater of operations is divided into areas and forces are assigned for each. Such forces should be sufficiently strong to seize and hold the most important city in the area assigned and to be able to send combat patrols in all directions." In Somalia, the initial reinforcements will be more Americans, with soldiers from other countries eventually following to relieve the Americans. (Hopefully, American involvement will end during this phase, but for the sake of argument let's continue the campaign plan.) Regardless of where the reinforcements come from, the peacekeeping force will conduct operations to establish localized U.N. control. At a minimum, these operations will include disarming the so called "technicals," establishing neutrality zones, escorting convoys, conducting psychological operations, and patrolling.

Once all their reinforcements arrive, the U.N. comes to a decision point. It must either resign itself to an open-ended peacekeeping mission, or take action to develop a survivable Somali Government. Should the U.N. opt to establish a Somalia Government capable of surviving without U.N. troops, the U.N. forces would move on to Phase 3 of the operation.

*Phase 3. Assumption of control of executive agencies and cooperation with the legislative and judicial agencies.* "If the measures in Phase 2 do not bring deci-



*A U.S. Marine in Somalia keeps a crowd of local Somali under control.*



Marines during the so-called Banana War era fought many "small wars." The Marines pictured above are forming a skirmish line during fighting in the area between Monte Cristi and Santiago on the island of Hispaniola, June 1916.

sive results, it may be necessary to resort to more thorough measures. This may involve the establishment of a military government or martial law in varying degree from minor authority to complete control of the principal agencies of the native government." In this phase, more thorough measures include arming and training a competent, apolitical native constabulary to relieve the U.N. troops and establishing and administering an interim government or holding and supervising elections. Simultaneously, the U.N. forces would step up their actions to "break the resistance to law and order by a combination of effort of physical and moral means." Also during this phase, U.N. forces would continue to "carry the burden of most" of the peacekeeping duties. The new constabulary, supported by U.N. forces, would be "increasingly employed as early as practicable in order that these native agencies may assume their proper responsibility of restoring law and order in their own country as an agency of their government."

**Phase 4. Routine police functions.** In this phase, "military police functions and judicial authority, to the extent that they have been assumed by our military forces, are gradually returned to the native agencies to which they properly belong." Also, the burden sharing roles are shifted so that the new Somali constabulary assumes the majority of the peacekeeping duties and the U.N. forces "act as a reserve in support of the native forces and are actively employed only in grave emergencies." The U.N. forces are "with-

drawn to the large centers, thus affording a better means for caring for the health, comfort, and recreation of the command."

**Phase 5. Withdrawal from theater operations.** In this phase, "... when order is restored, or when the responsible native agencies are prepared to handle the situation without other support, the troops are withdrawn upon orders from higher authority. This process is progressive from the back country or interior outward, in reverse order to the entry into the country."

Most of this plan, and all of the quoted material above, was actually written over 50 years ago by the Marines who drafted the 1940 edition of the Corps' *Small Wars Manual*, a volume whose purpose was to correct what its authors saw as "... a sad lack of authoritative texts on the methods employed in small wars."

Since the *Manual* appeared 50 years ago, numerous other works have been published as "authoritative texts" to redress the "sad lack" noted by the *Manual*'s authors. Chief among these is the U.S. Army's *FM 100-20*. This is a well-written, substantive work that details the Army doctrine for military operations in low-intensity conflicts. However, neither *FM 100-20* nor any other modern work surpasses the *Small Wars Manual* in the breadth and scope of its coverage of the subject of small wars, or what experts today are calling "nontraditional roles." The information in the *Manual* represents the lessons learned by Marines familiar with "nontraditional roles" from 36

consecutive years of campaigning in small wars. As a result, the ideas, concepts, and doctrine contained in the *Manual* remain as pertinent to today's multithreat environment as they were to the small wars of the interwar period.

This is not to say, of course, that every bit of information in the *Manual* is still applicable. Admittedly, some of its advice has been superseded by political, structural, or technological advances in the world since its writing. For instance, it is doubtful that the Marine Corps will act alone as the sole representative of the U.S. Government in any future conflict. The U.S. military force structure and international political realities make even single-nation operations unlikely. Therefore, today's reader should consider the references to a Marine force as a reference to a joint task force, or as in the case of Operation RESTORE HOPE, to a coalition force under the auspices of the U.N. The *Manual* also contains tactical considerations, once necessary for Marines in small wars, that no longer apply, e.g., the *Manual*'s advice regarding butchering animals for food. However, these few minor distractions aside, the *Small Wars Manual* still offers an abundance of military advice to a commander embarking on a small war. The advice offered spans every level of campaign—strategic, operational, and tactical. It is not written in the heady, intellectual style of university academics, but in the down-to-earth, say-what-you-mean style of one Marine to another.

The *Manual*'s advice at the strategic level is relatively sparse, owing to the authors' recognition that strategic goals, then as now, were set by the National Command Authorities, and not the operational commander. It does, however, address the strategic relationship between the political and military leadership in small wars by indicating that military operations in small wars differ from those of larger, more conventional operations. It makes the point that the military commander may face politically mandated restrictions in the development of his campaign plan, including troop ceilings or restrictive rules of engagement. The *Manual*'s advice to commanders with political limitations is to comply fully with the "spirit" of the political decision.

The *Manual* also recognizes that "the difficulty is sometimes of an eco-

nomical, political, or social nature and not a military problem in origin," and that "the application of purely military measures may not, by itself restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political, or social." Finally, the *Manual* contains this guidance regarding the overall strategic intent of military actions in small wars: "The motive in small wars is not material destruction. It is usually a project dealing with social, economic and political development of the people."

The real value of the *Small Wars Manual*, however, lies in its detailed discussion on planning and conducting a campaign at the operational and tactical levels of wars. At the operational level, the *Manual* contains advice on how to develop a campaign plan to obtain national objectives and general guidance on how to avoid potential pitfalls. The *Manual* advises those planning a campaign for a small war to remember that "it is not at war with a neighboring state; it proposes no aggression of territory; its purpose is friendly and it wishes to accomplish its objectives with as little military display as possible with a view of gaining the lasting friendship of the inhabitants of the country."

The *Manual* doesn't stop there. It contains detailed information on theater

design and organization. It provides "A Form for a Study of the Theater of Operations," which the planner can use to outline the political, economic, geographic, and military elements of power and their effects on the campaign. The *Manual* includes advice to the commander on what he should expect from each staff section and recommendations to each staff officer on how to better perform his duties.

On the tactical level, the *Manual* addresses virtually every tactical evolution faced by the U.N. peacekeeping forces in Somalia. U.N. forces will be providing security for the relief agencies' convoys; the *Manual* tells not only how to organize and defend a convoy, but also discusses the disposition of the escort in the convoy and the actions to be taken at a halt. Should the U.N. forces be called upon to supervise elections, the *Manual* can guide them from establishing a national board of elections, to registering voters, to supervising the actual voting. And, should the situation turn more violent, the *Manual* contains an abundance of information on patrolling, small unit tactics, and ambushes.

The shift in the world scene from a bipolar world where two Goliaths confronted each other over the traditional invasion routes of Europe, to a coalition of nations trying to maintain peace in an unstable world, has many

military experts searching for new doctrine to complement their new "nontraditional missions." For Marines, who were known as America's nontraditional military force before they became the nation's amphibious force in World War II, the shift is like coming home. The Corps has a long tradition of small wars campaigning from the shores of Tripoli to the beaches of Grenada. The Corps earned its reputation as America's State Department troops by conducting nontraditional missions 180 times in 37 countries from 1800 to 1934. The lessons they learned from these campaigns were developed into doctrine, which they then published in what they named the "*Small Wars Manual*." The *Manual* chronicled the lessons they learned in the early part of this century so that their successors would not have to repeat their mistakes. While the *Manual's* language may be dated, its substance is not. Although no doctrinal publication can cover all possible contingencies in the operational continuum, the *Small Wars Manual* certainly provides today's commanders, staff officers, and noncommissioned officers a basis for the doctrine to execute the nontraditional military roles of the future.



>Maj Weltsch is currently assigned to Maxwell AFB, AL.

## Small War Lessons Learned

by Maj R. Scott Moore

*The Marine Corps has had a long history of involvement in low intensity conflicts. Today's Corps can draw many lessons by studying its involvement in the "Banana Wars" of the early 20th century.*

Recent international events have forced the American military to undergo a controversial reevaluation of its future. Military planners are reexamining their missions in light of the end of the Cold War and in light of outcries from Congress and the public for reduced defense spending. Both the Army and the Marine Corps have staked a claim to low-intensity conflict, an ill-defined level of war that encompasses a broad spectrum of operations ranging from peacekeeping to sustained counterinsurgency. Both pro-

fess to be expeditionary and, therefore, the weapon of choice for a nation faced with largely unknown future threats.

For Marines, the question is far more basic. Essentially, it can be summarized as follows: Given a requirement to provide expeditionary forces for low-intensity conflict, how should Marines prepare for small wars? For the foreseeable future, conflicts will most likely be fought in a cloudy politico-military environment often devoid of concrete guidance. Closing with

and destroying an elusive enemy will be curtailed by equally pressing demands to limit casualties and collateral damage. Operation JUST CAUSE and its follow-on, PROMOTE LIBERTY in Panama, offer excellent examples, as does the current operation in Somalia. Marines in these operations quickly discovered that traditional training and organization did not adequately prepare them for situations in which they were required to neutralize an enemy one day, and then, a few days later, help many of these same people